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OUTCOME OF A DIALOGUE

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2 *OUTCOME OF A DIALOGUE: Chiara Lubich's recent trip to Japan provided an occasion to sum up the collaboration accomplished over the past four years between The Rissho Kosei-kai and the Focolare.*

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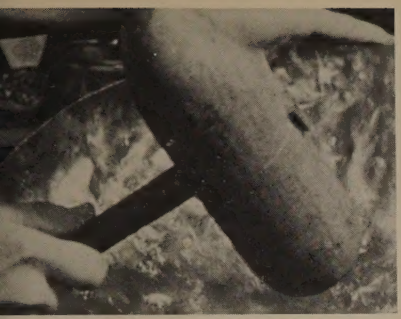

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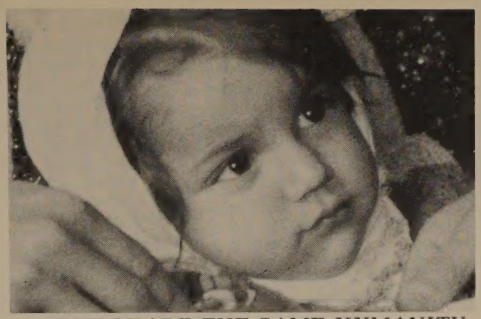

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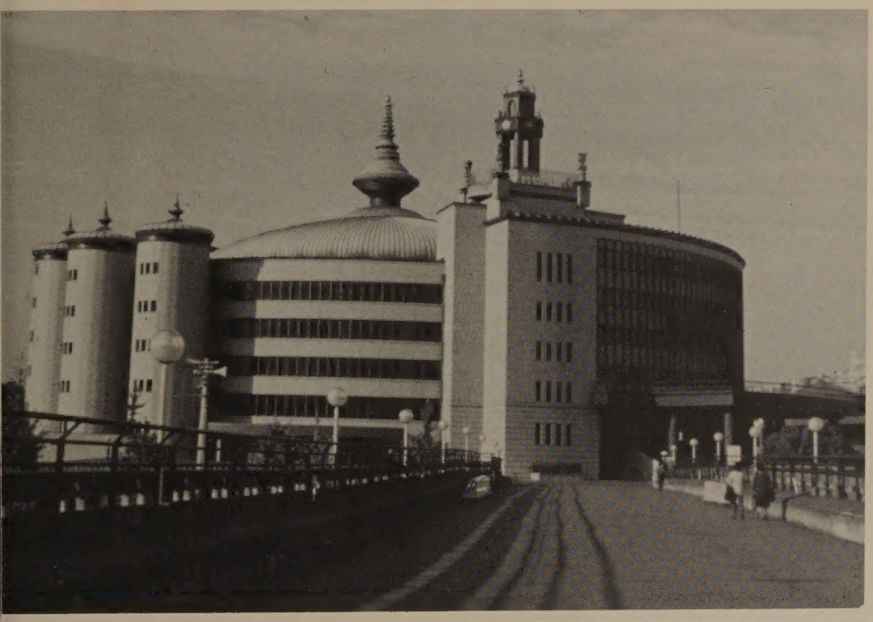
OUTCOME OF A DIALOGUE

by Enzo Fondi

During the eightieth birthday celebration of Nikkyo Niwano, founder of the Rissho Kosei-kai, Chiara Lubich, present in Tokyo for this occasion, spoke of the four years of collaboration between the Focolare and the Rissho Kosei-kai.



(above)"The Great Sacred Hall" where Chiara Lubich spoke. (right) Fumon Hall, a meeting hall which seats 5,000 people; one of the largest of its kind in the Orient.

Tokyo, November 1985

Over a period of four years, many things can happen but what has taken place over this time span in a spirit of co-operation between the Rissho Kosei-kai and the Focolare Movement is amazing. The opportunities to meet have been frequent and hopes in this dialogue are continually on the rise. This was the conclusion reached after the most recent contacts that took place in Tokyo last November.

Perhaps, however, we're getting ahead of ourselves. Let's go back to the opening days of the trip.

First contacts

The first visits that Chiara Lubich made, together with a group of focolarini, while in Japan were to the Apostolic Pro-nuncio, Bishop Carew, and to Bishop Shirayanagi, Archbishop of Tokyo. These two occasions were sources of encouragement for the work of the Focolare Movement in Japan and future guidelines were outlined. In particular Archbishop Shirayanagi emphasized the importance of announcing the Gospel in Japan principally through a testimony of life.

On November 14th, Chiara met with Nikkyo Niwano, president of the lay Buddhist association, the Rissho Kosei-kai. After being welcomed, as always, with exquisite cordiality, Chiara presented a summary of the activities in which the two movements have collaborated since their first meeting in Tokyo four years ago. It was ►

(left) Chiara Lubich's first visit in Tokyo was to Bishop Carew, the papal representative to Japan.

(right) Following a Japanese tradition, Nikkyo Niwano breaks the cover of a bottle of sake *with a wooden hammer.*

an ample list that highlighted the relationship of cooperation, particularly in regard to the World Conference of Religions for Peace (W.C.R.P.). It was in this area, in fact, that most of the work of the two movements took place in the different countries where the W.C.R.P. is present. In New York, for example, signatures collected by both groups in favor of the bilateral nuclear freeze were presented to the United Nations. There was collective action between both movements and the European centers of the W.C.R.P. During the 4th Assembly of the W.C.R.P. in Nairobi, members of the Focolare Movement in Kenya were entrusted with the organization of the event and they also actively participated in the General Assembly. Chiara was asked to prepare a message, which was then read to the entire Assembly.

What are the prospects for further collaboration? Plans are already underway involving the Gen of the Focolare (predominantly Roman Catholic) and Moslem youth of Kenya in a program of assistance to African nations struck by drought. Representatives of both movements will attend the International Council of W.C.R.P. to be held in Peking in June 1986, and the Asiastic Conference of the W.C.R.P. which will be held in Seoul, South Korea, also in June 1986.

Another important event was the "Inter-religious Forum of Asiatic Youth for Peace" held in Manila in April 1985. Here, too, the organization of the convention was entrusted to the youth of the Focolare Movement in the Philippines. They in turn formed a committee with the youth of the Rissho Kosei-kai. The Conference was successful and future initiatives of an international and inter-religious nature were planned in the areas of sports, culture, and art.

There was also mention of the participation of 30 young people of the Rissho Kosei-kai in the youth festival held recently in Rome, while in March of last year Natalia Dallapiccola and other members of the Focolare Movement attended the celebration in Tokyo marking the anniversary of the founding of the Rissho Kosei-kai.

This long list of joint activities presented by Chiara came as a happy surprise to

Nikkyo Niwano. He listened with great attention and his joy and appreciation for all that had been done clearly showed on his face. He then rose to express his esteem for Chiara Lubich and for the Movement, emphasizing the kinship between his association and the Focolare. Rev. Niwano reiterated his belief that the achievement of peace lies in the collaboration among different religions, and that all that is done in favor of peace is blessed by God. "I have worked for peace for many years," Mr. Niwano added, "and before meeting you (Chiara) I thought I was the only person to think and act as I did...."

He then quoted Tien Tai, a Buddist monk who lived 1100 years ago, and gave each person present a fan with Tien Tai's words: "Jcinen Sanzen" "one heart, three thousand worlds." In this phrase Tien Tai had condensed his doctrine of the "three thousand worlds contained in one thought," meaning it only takes one thought in accord with the will of God, just one thought inspired by God to win over thousands of people. This was what Nikkyo Niwano wanted to leave with us as a sign of his love and good wishes. "It's a simple rule," he concluded. "When we have in our hearts the desire to give everything to God, it is then that our way of life is less complicated and everything returns to us as a natural consequence."

The festival of "Sanju"

The Japanese consider a person's 80th birthday, called "Sanju," to be a very special occasion and it is celebrated on a grand scale. This was also the case this past November 15th, the 80th birthday of Nikkyo Niwano.

For two consecutive days in the Great Sacred Hall and in the nearby Fumon Hall, nearly 41,500 persons, and another 200,000 linked by telephone, participated in the events taking place. The celebrations began with a religious ceremony, accompanied by the offering of flowers and lit candles and a recitation from the Lotus Sutra conducted by the eldest son of Mr. Niwano, Nichiko. This was followed by a congratulatory address from the head director of the Rissho Kosei-kai, Mr. Motoyuki Naganuma.

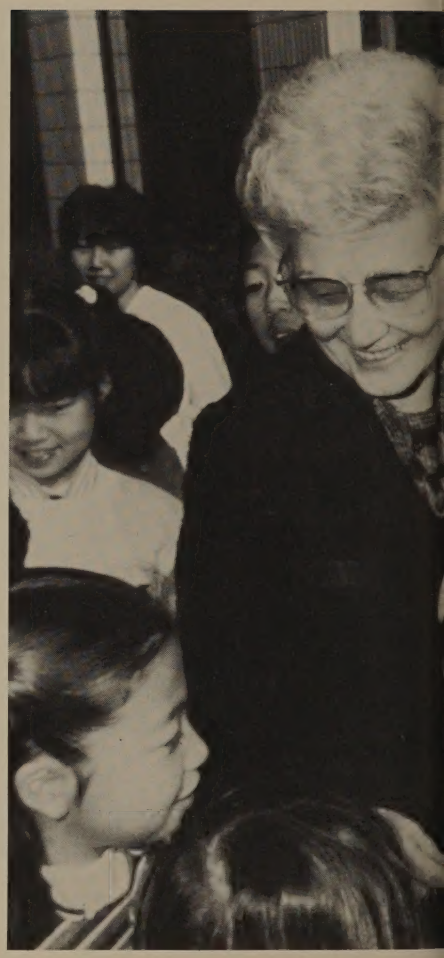
Among the special guests were notable national and international figures and civic and religious leaders like the representative of the Holy See in Japan, the Apostolic Pronuncio, who read a special message from Cardinal Casaroli, the Vatican Secretary of State. Cardinal Casaroli, in the name of the Holy Father, expressed to Mr. Niwano heartfelt best wishes and "deep appreciation for Mr. Niwano's untiring work for spiritual renewal, religious freedom, inter-faith dialogue and world ►

peace." The Holy Father also sent his blessing to the participants of the celebration and to all the members of the Rissho Kosei-kai.

In her address, Chiara Lubich remembered with admiration and esteem the three works which demonstrate the depth and fruitfulness of Mr. Niwano's life: a vast lay movement of 6 million members, the W.C.R.P. which is a meeting point for religious leaders who work for world peace, and the Movement for an Enlightened Society which works in the social field, helping people to put their search for the Absolute and the Eternal into concrete action in their daily lives. Chiara concluded affirming that if the members of all the religions would recognize each other as brothers and sisters, peace would spread more easily and would soon rule over all the earth.

At this point of the celebration, the undersecretary of the Vatican Secretariat for Non-Christians, Father Shirieda, a Japanese Salesian priest, read the warm message of greetings from the President of the Secretariat, Cardinal Arinze. After him, spoke Mr. Masaru Ibuka, president of the Movement for an Enlightened Society and founder of Sony.

Lastly, Mr. Nikkyo Niwano delivered his address which touched on three basic points: the commitment to live the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in order to make Japan a happy and peaceful nation, his gratitude to the Holy Father and his admiration for the Focolare Movement and personally for Chiara. He brought out these same themes again at the reception held at their headquarters. At the reception, as well, different people were invited to speak, including university professors, personalities in the fields of Japanese politics, industry and culture. All of them expressed their affection and esteem for President Niwano. The Minister of Public Works said that Japan has attained a very high level of technical development but the hearts of Japanese people are often empty. It is people like Nikkyo Niwano, he affirmed, who give birth to renewed hope and fill the human heart with noble aspirations. Rev. Niwano then responded by thanking everyone and he concentrated his short talk still more explicitly on his relationship with the Holy Father and with Chiara, again expressing his personal esteem for them and his desire to continue the ongoing dialogue.



A day full of happiness

Besides the days reserved for contacts and dialogue with the Buddhists, meetings with the members of the Focolare Movement in Japan and Korea were also planned. Particularly important among these was the one held on Sunday, November 17th, at Sophia University, a Jesuit University in Tokyo. The motto for the day was "Revolutionize the World with the Word" and this was the thrust of Chiara's talk to the community of the Movement. It was an invitation to live the Gospel and communicate the experiences made by putting into practice the word of life.

In this way, Chiara said, the Christian revolution is born, which changes relationships among people at their very roots and makes them become "a people, a community, a portion of living Church." It is the Word that puts us in communion with God when we place it at the center of our lives above all with that love that is the synthesis of the Gospel.

That the life of the Word was already a reality for many was

By putting into practice the word of life the Christian revolution is born which changes relationships among people at their very roots and makes them become "a people, a community, a portion of living Church." Chiara addressed these words to the community of the Focolare Movement in Japan.
(left) Chiara with the Gen 3 of Japan.

obvious. Different presentations, in fact, highlighted the relationship between the Gospel and the structures of the Focolare. Overcoming the proverbial Japanese reserve, the audience clearly made known its feelings and its determination to be "the living word" and bring this light to everyone. For those present who were not Christian, it was their first impact with the Gospel. Four of them who came from distant parts of Japan said: "We have understood that Christianity is not only going to church to pray, but it is a modern and down-to-earth way of life."

Many participants felt their commitment to further interfaith dialogue was reinforced. "Just one word lived by all would be enough to change the course of history," Chiara said. We could change the course of history around us, even this very day, if we put the words of the Gospel into practice where we work, study, and live. This was the conclusion drawn from her message: the Gospel revolution, had already changed a little piece of the world enclosed by the four walls of Sophia University. This change had a face and a name: Christian joy.

Youth in dialogue

At the conclusion of this day-long gathering, another meeting began in a different part of campus. It was the first one to be jointly organized by the Rissho Kosei-Kai and the Focolare Movement. It was to provide the opportunity for an exchange of experiences among youth of different religions. There were Shintoists, Buddhists, Roman Catholics and members of the so-called, "new religions" of Japan, one hundred and fifty participants, all divided into a dozen little groups.

Concrete service to others, unity among persons of different religions, world peace, the experiences of the Focolare, the need to repeat similar meetings, were the topics touched upon in the groups. The young people from ►

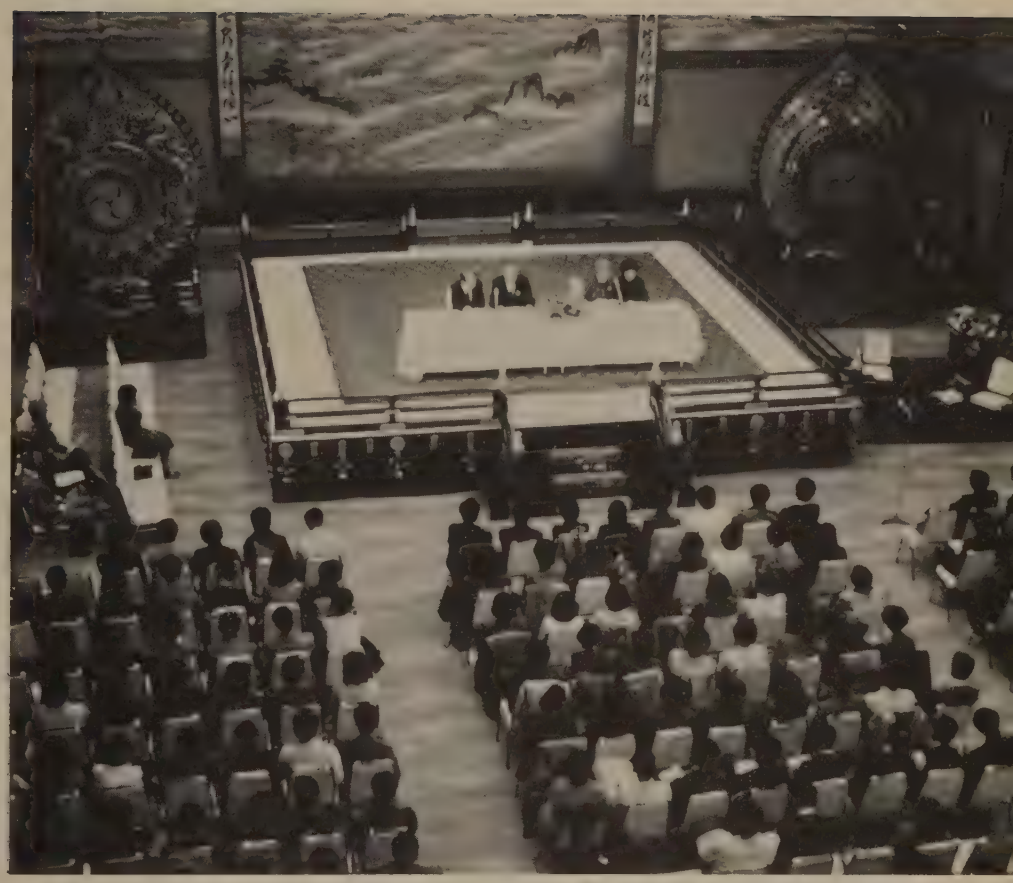
Shinshu-ren, an association that gathers together both Shintoists and Buddhists, spoke of their visit to "Bukas Palad," the center of social services in Manila organized by the Focolare Movement. They were struck by the generosity of the people who help out and offer their services thus bearing witness to Christian love. Among the youth of the Rissho Kosei-kai, it was a commonly held conviction that the dialogue begun between Chiara Lubich and Nikkyo Niwano should be extended to all levels between the two movements.

Interview of the Kosei newspaper

The "Kosei-Shinbun" is the Rissho Kosai-kai weekly newspaper with a circulation of 1,600,000 copies. The editor, Mr. Okabe, asked Chiara several questions regarding the spirit of the Focolare Movement.

Chiara's answers were welcomed with great interest. They described the fundaments of the Christian faith which lie at the basis of the spirituality of the Movement. In particular, Chiara emphasized the supernatural character of Christian love which is a participation in the love of God, the problem of salvation as it is proposed by the doctrine of the Church and the sacraments as a means of santification.

When asked about the future of the friendship between the Focolare and the Rissho Kosei-kai , Chiara replied that future collaboration would follow the outline established by past and present experience. She continued that the common objective to work for peace and for the good of humankind will suggest concrete ways to work together. "Foremostly, how-



(left) Before returning to Rome Chiara met at the airport with Nichiko Niwano, eldest son of Nikkyo Niwano, and his wife, Yoshie.
(right) Natalia and Enzo answer—in Chiara's name—the questions prepared by 300 Buddhist youth.

ver, we entrust ourselves to God," Chiara said, "whose will was for us to meet and who ertainly has plans for the uture. It is a matter of letting im work, rather than formuating elaborate programs. Our elationship will always be in he form of dialogue which is irst and foremost a sharing of piritual goods."

A singular conclusion

It was after this interview that hat Chiara received word from Rome that the Holy Father was equesting her presence as uditor at the General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops vhich was soon to begin. Chiara, as a result, left Tokyo ooner than she expected.

Those who remained, however, participated in the festival prepared by the youth of the Rissho Kosei-kai. There, before 10,000 young people, Natalia Dallapiccola read the message hat Chiara had prepared for hem. Their youth movement is growing rapidly and is attempting to sow the seed of deep eligious and moral values in young men and women. These youth, like the Gen, go against the current of the materialistic consumer society of Japan.

Nikkyo Niwano also addressed these youth people explaining the fundamental points of the Buddhist religion but making frequent references to the life and spirituality of the Focolare. With great openness and trust he proposed to the young people "to become Christian, if this is what you feel you should do," or become good Buddhists, according to what their inner voice urged them to do. It was a sincere testimony of faith in Christian values, which he feels to be so close in various ways to the Buddhist way of purification and illumination, the way of the Bodhisattva.

It was impossible not to recall the conversation Nikkyo Niwano had with Pope Paul VI twenty years ago. Rev. Niwano has, in fact, repeated on many occasions since then that this exchange left him "with faith in Christianity" and a sense of responsibility to work for world peace—within the Buddhist world and with other major religions.

"In our world," the Buddhist youth sang, "the bells of peace are ringing and the light of love is shining. People from all over, let's all join hands and build a future where grace abounds." □

MARIAPOLIS LUMINOSA

The Permanent Mariapolis of North America is now a reality.

The official inauguration will take place on September 14, 1986 at Mariapolis Luminosa in Hyde Park, New York. Chiara Lubich will be present.

For further information
contact the Focolare Center nearest you.
(see inside back cover for addresses)

WORD OF LIFE

"But because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages." (Philippians 3:7)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"But because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages."

Most likely Paul had learned that some extremists had shown up in the city of Philippi as they had elsewhere and they were saying that faith in Jesus Christ was not enough in order to belong to the authentic people of God. According to them, it was also necessary to perform the works that Moses had prescribed in the name of God, referring in particular to circumcision.

In other words they thought that it was fundamentally the law of God given through Moses that made people righteous. As a consequence, then, it was the works people did in observance of the law, their ability, their merits—assisted by grace if necessary—that would bring them to salvation.

According to this way of thinking, Jesus would then occupy a less essential place than the Mosaic Law, a place of secondary importance.

"But because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages."

Paul, too, fully shared these ideas up until the time of his conversion. He defended them so zealously that he even persecuted the followers of Jesus who opposed them.

So it was, however, that with the apparition of Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul changed from a fanatic persecutor to become one of the persons who most loved Christ. It became luminously clear to him that Jesus is the Son of God, the Lord, that he is the center of history, the goal toward which all the Law and the Prophets tend, the end toward which creation and all the peoples of the earth are oriented. Above all, he saw Jesus as the Savior sent to us by the Father. As a consequence, Paul understood how the Mosaic institutions (circumcision, the Temple, etc.) had already been surpassed and their observance no longer had meaning. Salvation, in fact, could come only from Jesus and is open to all peoples, to all persons without discrimination. What counts now is to entrust oneself to him, to his Word, to accept the grace that he wants to give.

"But because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages."

The issue about the necessity of the Mosaic Law—as it was discussed at the time of Paul—hid a way of seeing things, an attitude, which was radically contrary to the Gospel. Elements of this attitude were an excessive trust in one's own ►

ability, in one's efforts and personal merit; the all too human pride in belonging to the chosen people; the presumption and the appropriation of the treasure of Revelation; an attitude of superiority and discrimination toward other peoples who did not possess the truth; above all, it was lack of response to the light and to the action of the Holy Spirit who guides the plan of salvation through history. It is precisely this mentality that St. Paul wants to consider as a disadvantage, literally "as so much rubbish" as if to say, as a thing which cannot be brought back.

"But because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages."

None of us now would even think of questioning the primacy of Christ, the place he holds in our salvation. However, it can also happen to us that a mentality similar to that of the people Paul refers to can pop up.

If we are not careful, we, too, can fall back into thinking like that, into the attitudes that the apostle says he has rejected for good.

For example, we can stagnate in a cold and lifeless observance of the precepts of God and of the Church, and neglect love of neighbor which is the heart and the aim of all the commmandments. We can rely on activities, on natural talents and ability, on material accomplishments, more than on the power of Jesus' grace. It is easy to fall into spiritual pride, to consider ourselves better than others because of the truth we possess, to erect a fence between those we consider close or far from it, between believers and non-believers—all things that are contrary to the heart of God who calls all to salvation.

"But because of Christ, I have come to consider all these advantages that I had as disadvantages."

This word of life, then, speaks to us of conversion, of a deep change of mentality; it speaks to us of humility, simplicity, detachment from ourselves, above all in doing good and in giving witness to our faith. Furthermore, it speaks to us of habits we hold onto that should be given up, of a greater freshness and thrust to be restored to our Christian life so that the beauty of the Gospel can shine forth. This word of life urges us to emphasize what is essential and more universal in the message of Jesus: to live his Word, to be at our neighbor's service.

May it not happen that many people who sincerely seek the truth do not encounter Jesus because of our inconsistency or unfaithfulness to the Gospel.

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

Melting the ice

For two years now I have been working the night shift as a registered nurse on a surgical floor of a hospital. Not long ago I happily noted that a good rapport existed among my coworkers on the night shift. We helped each other when the workload backed up; we worked as a team.

However, soonafter, a problem arose. Some of the nurses with whom I work began to complain about the day nurses not doing their jobs. In fact, patients were not always cared for as well as they should have been. Oftentimes essential data, such as the fluid intake of patients, was left uncharted. We would find, too, that the admission procedure on patients was at times incomplete. Also, the nursing station and medication room was always left in disorder. Each evening, we would begin our shift by cleaning up and, before going home in the morning, we would leave everything in order. When we would return to work the next evening, again we would find a disaster.

After a week of this, our head nurse left an open memo in the "Communications Book." There was, she explained, an attitude problem—particularly

among the night nurses. Furthermore, they were constantly complaining. In order to remedy the situation, she had decided to clarify some of the rules in writing, citing the specific tasks for which the night nurses were to be responsible.

Needless to say, the night staff was up in arms. All the blame had been put on us. I, too, had a real struggle to overcome my angry feelings. When I finished reading the note I spun around, nearly bumping into one of the nurses from the day shift, and responded with a curt remark. This certainly wasn't living the Gospel! In fact, the word of life for that month was: "If anyone wants to be first, he must make himself last of all and servant of all."(Mk. 9:35) I remembered then my resolution to put myself at the service of others, as much as I could, like Jesus would have done in my place.

The night staff met with the day staff for our regular "report session"wherein they informed us of the status of each patient. As soon as we finished the exchange of information I apologized for my brusk remark and began my work.

Mutiny was in the air, however. All around me I could feel the anger. My co-workers had already decided not to speak to the day shift staff. The atmospere had turned to ice. Nobody wanted to go out of their way to help anyone else. No one cleaned up the medication room. My co-workers pushed the wrappers and empty supplies to one side in order to make room for their own work. Disorder was everywhere. The garbage pile became a mountain. The thought kept returning to me: "...servant of all" and I was searching my mind as to where I should begin. Certainly it was a whole new countenance of Jesus Forsaken before me. I was squarely caught in the division between the day and night shift staff. With as little "noise" as possible I began doing as I did before, that is, cleaning up, emptying the garbage, etc. Throughout the night,whenever I had the chance, I listened while the other nurses shared their genuine grievances and I completely understood them. After a while it was possible to cautiously interject some of the more positive points of the day nurses, their pressures and problems. This went on for several nights. Aside from the work pace which is always intense, I kept trying to build a bridge between the two factions. Little by little, the anger in the air seemed to lessen.

One night we decided to make a list of all the tasks which we felt really were the responsibility of the day shift. In between caring for the patients, we jotted them down and I continued with the little chores, leaving behind as much order as possible.

Before leaving that next morning, the head nurse called me into her office. I was surprised when she asked how work was going. She explained that she had purposely assigned me to work with each of the night staff nurses thinking that I would bring some calm to the situation. I told her how things were and also about the list we had put together that night. Some of the problems were new to her and she was sincerely glad to know about them. The next night when we came to work, we found a spotless nurses' station. The medication room was in order, the garbage had been emptied, patient information was up-to-date. We also saw in the "Communications Book" the list we had made the night before. The nurses were overjoyed! It seemed that the wall of ice between the staff had already begun to melt. It was low key but real.

That night, when I was about to do one of the chores that the day shift had accidentally missed, one of my colleagues said to me: "Listen, you've got a lot to do. Leave that for me." I had to smile.

S.L.

THE RISEN LORD IN OUR HEART

On different occasions you have spoken of making an exclusive choice of Jesus Forsaken.[1] I start out my day really trying my best and I experience that love for him is truly the only valuable thing. Sometimes, however, I feel overcome by a sense of fear. What should I do so that this fear does not stop me from loving?

Aldo Panarari
29 years old

Sometimes I realize that I have let go of my choice of Jesus Forsaken, that I have traded it for something else. What can I do to make my choice of him more constant?

Francesco Chatel
25 years old

Fear, stopping in our love and the temptations to relinquish our choice of the cross for something else are instances that we have all experienced. How can we overcome these inclinations?

You are young; you have your lives before you. You can become athletes. Remember that the most wonderful thing in this world is to become athletes for God. To do this you must train and train; train yourselves in the spirit.

In fact, you must become athletes of God in order to draw the world to him, and you can do it if you take up your cross everyday, embracing, as we say, Jesus Forsaken.

Do you feel fear at times? Take advantage of it; fear, too, is an aspect of him. For us, fear is him; it is Jesus Forsaken. Jesus who cried out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" In that moment he experienced fear but he overcame it and said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit."[2] This is what we must do, too, that is, embrace the suffering, accept the fear and go ahead. The very thing that blocks our path can, instead, help us to speed along our way.

Do you feel stopped? Use it in order to love Jesus. He, too, had always gone ahead, sure that his father was with him. "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" seems to bring everything to a halt. It came as a consequence of having taken upon himself the blockage that all human beings in the world set up in their relationship with God. We can take advantage of this feeling of being blocked in order to say, "It's him!" and go ahead.

Sometimes we betray Jesus Forsaken, that is, we love something else, but not him, so it's a failure, a small failure, but even in our failures we can recognize him. Didn't he, too, seem like a failure when he cried out as he did?

In other words, we have to take advantage of every suffering in order to embrace Jesus Forsaken. What happens when we embrace him? The Holy Spirit comes to us. His presence opens up like a flower, we feel the impulses of the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. The Risen Lord reigns in our heart.

Chiara Lubich

1) Refers to Jesus in the moment, when on the cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46); 2) Lk 23:46.

OUR WORK AND REDEMPTION

By ANTONIO MARIA BAGGIO

The New Testament offers the principle elements upon which, over time, the Church formulates the Christian vision of human activity.

Poverty, when it is spoken about in the Old Testament, does not indicate merely an absence of material goods. It also refers to a religious attitude characterized by humility, that is, by an awareness of the relationship of Creator and created that exists with God. The opposite kind of attitude is that of the rich person who detaches himself or herself from the order implied in this relationship and relies solely on his or her own resources. This kind of work, and the social organization that goes with it, results in a certain domination of the world which separates man from God and from the rest of humanity that remains in misery. The poor, as a consequence of the obvious injustice and separation, turn to God asking him to return unity to the created world and to humanity.

These are the poor who turned to God throughout the history of the people of Israel, all the way to Mary. *"I am the servant of the Lord,"* were her words; they express the goal of Israel to discover in the poor not the outcast but the chosen of God. The angel's words recall the greeting addressed to Israel by the prophets, *"Rejoice, O daughter of Zion."* *"Rejoice, O Mary,"* Luke wrote. The words of the book of Sirach seem to be meant for her, *"Humble yourself the more, the greater you are, and you will find favor with God. For great is the power of God; by the humble he is glorified."*[1]

United Nations

While, in fact, the woman in Genesis is condemned to be dominated by the man, Mary is called "full of grace," that is, the object of God's favor, the most beloved of all.

The reality expressed in the angel's words released the woman from any subjugation to man. In Luke's gospel, Mary is the one to give Jesus his name, a right that traditionally fell to the father. God asks for her consent, for her acceptance of the task of bringing to life the One coming into the world to save it. The dominion of the human being over creation is thus re-established through Mary in all the perfection of its original plan.

Once the humiliation of the first woman is blotted out in Mary, we foresee the disappearance of every unjust relationship. In the "Magnificat," in fact, she reveals both the plan of God in history and of her role in fulfilling it: "*... he has confused the proud in their inmost thoughts. He has deposed the mighty ... and raised the lowly to high places. The hungry he has given every good thing while the rich he has sent empty away. He has upheld Israel his servant....*"[2] The social hierarchy of the ancient world, divided into so many different levels as a consequence of sin, is now spiritually overturned. This is possible because Mary, being poor, is completely void of that presence of age-old structures that ruled the relationships between people and with God. She does not represent these structures. She is instead the "new structure" which "contains" God made ►

man. In Mary there is the new rule, the principle of all relationships, the "how" answering every "who" and "what."

The Messiah will certainly fulfill all the expectations expressed in Nathan's prophecy.[3] He will be the king who comes to save his people, to free the poor and to govern with justice. He is, however, the son of the "servant of the Lord" who will shepherd his people as described in Ezechiel. His kingdom will come into being upon the disappearance of the very instruments of war: the horses and carriages that accompanied the warrior kings' triumphant return in ancient prophecies. On the day of victory instead the king of Zion will arrive on a donkey's back because, like his mother, he is humble. There will be no warriors around his throne; children, instead, will accompany him into the temple.[4]

Jesus' work

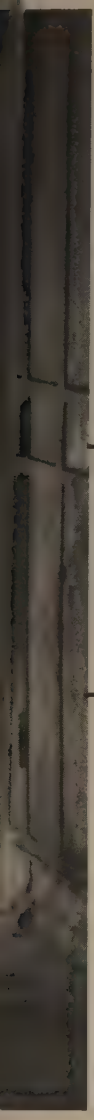
Work is often referred to in the New Testament. The working world, in fact, often supplied Jesus with just the right imagery for his teaching. He was not at all unfamiliar with manual labor for he, too, as Mark states, was a craftsman.

This connection between manual and intellectual work, such as preaching can be considered, is typical in the Israeli tradition. The Talmud, for example, puts religious studies and work on the same level. Wisdom, for the Hebrews, means also a project, a "know how" that is not detached from "doing." A wise person is an active person; the Book of Exodus recalls that God himself furnished his people with the wisdom, intellect and science needed for manual work.

Generally speaking, however, when the New Testament speaks of work and workers, it is done in the context of resolving other problems. Terms and images from the working world are used to communicate experiences and religious concepts. It does not contain specific doctrine on work. One could, in fact, say that any teaching about work was given more through the person of Christ than through his words. We should, therefore, look at the message of the New Testament as a whole and consider certain aspects which may seem to have little to do with work. The Church, however, through them has formulated the Christian vision of work.

Jesus' family was poor. We gather this from the words of St. Luke's Gospel, and from the information that we have about craftsmen at the time of Jesus. At the completion of the time of purification following delivery, women went to the temple in order to offer a lamb in sacrifice to God. The law, however, also took into consideration the financial situation of the family. A poorer person could offer two doves instead; and this is what Mary did.

Jesus, however, was not of the begging class. He was a poor person who lived off the



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(left) People come from the countryside to sell their wares in the Jerusalem marketplace.

work of his hands. Neither was he in need when he left his work in order to begin teaching. We know, in fact, that at the moment of his passion and death he wore a well-made seamless garment that the soldiers drew lots for instead of tearing. Among those who followed Jesus there were wealthy persons as well. There were women who, with the goods they possessed,[5] assisted the Master and his disciples. Jesus was not travelling around with a crowd of destitutes. His life style was such that women of upper-middle class status could also associate with him. He was often invited to the homes of rich friends. It is also true that derelicts approached him freely, a sign that among those who followed Jesus there was no class partiality.

Pasquale Foresi[6] has observed that at times the community purse held as many as 200 denari and at times it was empty. In one of these moments Jesus sent Peter to look for money in the mouth of a fish. This shows that it is impossible to interpret the events of Jesus' life looking only at external appearances, launching theories based on just one phrase. It is Jesus himself, rather, together with all his teaching, who offers a new interpretation of things.

St. Paul explains this point in no uncertain terms. Jesus, though rich (he was God) made himself poor so that through his poverty all those who follow him could become rich, that is, participants in the very life of God.[7] The apostle further explains, in another passage, that Jesus, although *"he was in the form of God ...he emptied himself and took the form of a slave."*[8] This singular choice that he made, of poverty, of a slave's condition, reaches its fullness in his obedience *"even unto death on the cross."* It is therefore essentially a spiritual poverty and servitude, one that began in the Old Testament and concluded with the cross. Isaiah had written about the *"servant of Yahweh"* despised and rejected by all; who takes upon himself the sufferings of the others and saves them by submitting to this punishment.[9] Jesus becomes this servant; his being is all love, in fact he even gives his life for his friends. He is the new law that Mary had announced in her Magnificat. As a consequence servants are no longer servants, but friends. The Eucharistic community renders obsolete the social hierarchy generated by sin.

"I am meek and humble of heart," Jesus said of himself. *"Of heart,"* his being poor is not just limited to a social status, but it is that too. If we compare the two versions of the Sermon on the Mount, it helps us to understand better this double aspect of poverty. Matthew speaks of those who are *"poor in spirit"* putting the accent on the religious meaning of poverty. By poor he means those for whom poverty has become an inner disposition.[10] Luke on the other hand means poor in the socio-economic sense categorizing them with the hungry, with those who weep, as opposed to the rich, to those who are already satisfied, to those who laugh. These two different meanings cannot be separated one from the other. The message that Jesus brought effects a renewal of every aspect of human life. Even though it addresses the inner life of every person, it cannot leave unaltered the social hierarchies produced by sin that generate injustices. It is logical therefore that the good news is just that, first and foremost for those suffering injustice. Jesus in fact wanted to be poor in both ways.

The Christian conscience

St. Paul considered work as a way of becoming poor, in order to be more of Christ. One can- ►

not announce the good news adopting a life style that is prestigious or even superior to that of those who must work in order to live. This is why Paul worked, even though he could have been supported by the communities that he founded and visited. He also wanted to avoid being confused with philosophers or preachers who abounded in Greek cities and who were paid to give lessons.

Work also served to organize the community, eliminating for example the inertia of those who, considering the end of the world close at hand, thought that it wasn't worth it to work. In reference to this St. Paul expressed himself very clearly to the Thessalonians *"The one who doesn't work, doesn't eat."*[11] The one who doesn't work cannot help the others either[12]; equality of economic resources cannot be reached and this was and is the fundamental element of the model of the Christian community as proposed by Luke in the Acts of the Apostles.

In order to understand their origins and the purpose of their existence, men in the Old Testament used God, in a certain sense as their mirror, and God, through his law, prescribed what to do and how to react, what man should think of himself. The relationship is not, however, one that only looks outwards. The law must become part of the person's inner life, present in the deepest recesses of the human being, which is called "heart." This is where the decision is made either for or against God. Deuteronomy says for example,

(right) "At the completion of the time of purification following childbirth, women went to the temple in order to offer a lamb in sacrifice to God."

"You will love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. These precepts that I am giving you today must be fixed in your heart."[13]

The idea of the heart reoccurs in the New Testament. The heart orients the person towards good or evil: *"Wherever your treasure lies, there your heart will be."*[14] Our fundamental relationship with God is written in our hearts. Paul also refers to this as he explains that the Holy Spirit has taken the place of the law in our hearts and reveals to us the very wisdom of God, a supernatural way of looking at events. Now it is through the action of the Spirit that we understand and decide. This explains the spiritual foundation of our being; without it the cross is foolishness. The "spiritual" person, instead, can accept the mystery of Christ and can understand the things of God. The Spirit explains the mystery of Christ and fills us with the love of God. The Christian conscience is essentially the awareness of this relationship of love.

When this conscience considers problems related with work, when it must form a professional ethic, this relationship is still present in it. Our work conforms to our conscience if it transmits the intimacy of this

relationship with God, that is, that relationship of inner unity in which the original image of God in man shines forth. Chiara Lubich has written, *"Through our work, nature receives the human imprint, but, since in loving we live out the fact that we are made in the image of God, nature transformed by us, and therefore our work, becomes almost the work of God.*

"Thus human beings continue the work of God, the Creator, and, in a way, they also continue the redemptive work of Christ."[15] Through our work, inasmuch as we love, we repeat the work of Christ; we recuperate and activate the original plan of God on all of creation. □

1) Sir 3:17-20; 2) Lk 1:51-54; 3) 2 Sm 7:4; 4) Mt 21:16; 5) Lk 8:1-3; 6) P. Foresi, "Aspects of poverty in the Gospels;" 7) 2 Cor 8:9; 8) Phil 2:6-11; 9) Is 49-55; 10) Mt 5:3-12; 11) 2 Thes 3:10; 12) Eph 4:28; 13) Dt 6:5-6; 14) Lk 12:34; 15) C. Lubich, "Economy and Work in the New Humanity Movement."

WE SHARE THE SAME HUMANITY

by VERA GIANNINI

The health of our world's children is everyone's concern. The immunization project, sponsored by UNICEF, is not only a concrete action to answer that concern but unites people of all cultures and ideologies in working together towards a common goal: to save our future generations.

"By 1990 all the children of the world will be immunized. They will be protected against measles, tetanus, whooping cough, tuberculosis, diphtheria, and polio: the six childhood diseases which, though practically wiped out in the Western world, are still a treacherous menace in the developing countries.

"Statistics show that more than three and a half million children die of these diseases every year and that three and a half million more are permanently crippled by them, or made blind, deaf, or mentally retarded. These are frightening figures. But no statistic in the world can tell us, on the other hand, how many children will be saved by this enormous undertaking now being launched worldwide by UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. Even if we did have figures on the total child population today, we still can not envision the number of children to be born by 1990, and even less the number of those to come thereafter, into a world made more hospitable to receive them. This is what UNICEF is aiming to achieve, and this is why the response has been so overwhelming.

"The immunization project is being hailed by government heads and officials on all levels. President Li Xiannian of China personally administered the first vaccine to launch the campaign in his country. India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi dedicated it as a 'living memorial' to his mother; the late Indira Gandhi. President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and President Belisario Betancur of Columbia gave their enthusiastic endorsement, as did many other heads of government worldwide.

"Even more overwhelming is the response from non-governmental and private sources," says Mrs. Allegra Morelli who, as UNICEF's Chief of the Office of Non-Governmental Affairs has firsthand knowledge on the subject.

Mrs. Morelli, who is originally from Rome, has been deeply involved in her work with UNICEF ever since she became one of the founding ►

members of its Italian National Committee in 1973. The mother of three, she had been fully devoted to home and family, but just at the moment that she was asking herself what she was going to do with her time (since the children had grown) she met a friend who asked her to come and help set up the UNICEF committee. Mrs. Morelli first agreed to work as a part-time volunteer but soon became so interested that she eventually became a professional.

"I'm glad that I never lost my 'volunteerism,' in terms of commitment," she confided to us, as she looked back at those early days, "but I hope I have become a professional. It's professionals that are needed in an organization like this. I don't know whether this is reflected in my work, but I can only say that even though it has absorbed so much of my time and my life it has fulfilled me so much."

Mrs. Morelli's offices are at the UNICEF headquarters in New York, but she believes in keeping in touch with the communities she serves. She has traveled in southeast Asia, including Vietnam, and Sri Lanka, and extensively in Africa, throughout Sudan, particularly Karthoum and down to the border with Uganda. She found the conditions there appalling, but at the same time she was made aware of something beyond the tragedy she saw.

"The famine in Ethiopia, for instance, as we were given to see it on TV—children with bloated bellies and flies all over their bodies—was terrible, but presenting these people solely in these terms was just as terrible. We do not realize that a country such as this has a culture and history of more than two thousand years. We send money and perhaps clear our consciences but all too easily do we forget that we all share the same humanity."

To Allegra Morelli, UNICEF is a very special, unique organization, because it is doing something for children—something that the whole world wants and needs—and because it works with every country regardless of its political viewpoint.

"Everybody can relate to a child, there are children in everybody's life. They are part of us," continued Mrs. Morelli. "We have a flag that everyone can adopt ... but at the same time it is an awesome responsibility to be held accountable for."

UNICEF is not funded on a compulsory basis, but by voluntary contributions on the part of governments and agencies, and by individuals. These are often simple people—old people who send a part of their pension each month, children who empty their piggybanks."

"Our world is becoming so small," she feels, "and news can be communicated so quickly that we cannot *not* be responsible for what happens, let's say, in a small remote village of Africa."

"And how does UNICEF reach the small villages and hamlets of Africa or Asia or any far away place?" we asked.

"UNICEF is a multi-national organization with headquarters in New York, national committees in the industrialized countries and field offices in the developing countries. The most vital part of the work is done on the field level. Originally UNICEF was created during World War II to help war-ravaged Europe get back on its feet. Once this was accomplished UNICEF directed its efforts toward the Third World.

In December of 1985 Turkey completed a nationwide immunization drive.

"The immunization project, which has now become a major priority and is therefore the project most publicized, is by no means the only UNICEF undertaking. Over its nearly forty years of life—UNICEF is one year younger than the UN and will celebrate its fortieth birthday in December 1986—it has developed a wide range of activities and services. Although it is primarily concerned with health care (like providing people with clean water, for instance), a good part of its work involves education.

"In more concrete terms, UNICEF has developed four very simple techniques which have really changed the lives of

John Isaac

the children they are trying to help. One of these techniques has been to encourage women to return to breast feeding, a practice which was being abandoned in many parts of the Third World. Formula feeding has in fact proved to be a disaster, because the necessary dilution of the powdered milk was being done with polluted water.

"The second technique we teach is how to monitor charts to help families identify malnutrition at an early stage. It is a sheet of paper on which the mother marks the child's weight, and if she sees no improvement over a certain period, she can go to the community center and consult the health workers there.

"The third such technique is called oral re-hydration. This is also achieved in a very simple way, by administering a combination of salt and sugar. It is a solution that can restore the loss of liquid a child may suffer as a consequence of diarrhea. It has saved many lives.

"And finally, there is the immunization project which has grown by leaps and bounds. Even though it is being implemented on a global scale, it has proved to be not only feasible but relatively easy and economical. Children can be vaccinated against all six diseases at the same time, and the use of disposable syringes has eliminated the danger of infection.

"The wonderful thing in all this," in Mrs. Morelli's opinion, "is that these programs are carried out notwithstanding all the racial, political, national and religious differences which exist. Once a project has been approved by a country's government, it moves on to the local level, with the cooperation of non-governmental agencies such as WHO (the World Health Organization, an agency of the UN), Caritas, the League of Red Cross Societies, the Rotary, and many others.

"In El Salvador it was the Archbishop of San Salvador ►

who negotiated with the guerillas and obtained a three day cease fire so that the children could be vaccinated," Mrs. Morelli recounted. "The vaccine was administered to the children of both the civilian population and the guerillas.

"UNICEF takes care of children from age zero to fifteen. Thus, a child born in 1985 will be fifteen at the beginning of the new century. And whatever we do for our children today, will affect the shape of the world in the twenty-first century.

"The first thing we must do, of course, is to assure the child's survival. That's our number one duty, and it means seeing to it that they have shelter, food, health care—the basics of life.

"Then we must provide protection—protection from war, from violence, from man-made as well as natural disasters like floods, earthquakes and all the kinds of destruction we see every day.

"And still it is not enough. After we have tried to provide all this, we must give children the chance to develop and receive an education, be it formal or informal.

"Above all, however, we must give our children hope, the certainty that all countries *can* work together for a better world. Our children live with the threat of nuclear war and the constant threat of injustice," Allegra Morelli concludes. "We must give them the conviction that every human being can make a difference." □

Images FOR words

For you has he commanded his angels to keep you in all your ways.

Psalm 91:11

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

We have believed in God's love for us

Compiled by Mary Adams

The golden thread of God's love reached a series of families in a simple way. Joe, a young miner, met a group of people trying to live the Gospel. They were members of the Focolare Movement. Coming home from that meeting, he gaily announced to his wife, "Susan, we're going to a Mariapolis!" When Susan asked him what *was* a Mariapolis, he just smiled, promising, "You'll see!" Later on she would smile remembering how happy he had been and how he couldn't wait to get there so that she and their two children could experience what he had found.

Once there at the Mariapolis, he called home to his parents: "You've got to come, too!" he said. "You've got to come see this, too!" And he himself would say, "From that point on, my life changed all around." He took books on the spirituality of unity with him everywhere. Whenever break time in the mines came round, he would take the book out of his pocket and begin to read. "Everything comes from the love of God," he told Susan, and he would repeat it, even when the mine shut down and work in the area seemed to be drying up. They were expecting their third child.

Meanwhile he continued to tell all his relatives about the Mariapolis and, in particular, he told Paul and Mary, his brother and sister-in-law.

"We were very close," Mary explained later. "Our two families had even lived together in the same house for a couple of years." Not a month later, Joe was helping the young couple receive a totally unexpected blow: Mary was diagnosed as having a rare blood disease. "He didn't so much repeat then: 'Everything comes from God's love for us,' as he *lived* it," Susan remembered. "You could *see* his faith."

A few months later, after he had again found work in a neighboring mine, Joe himself was injured. It was a freak accident: a cable breaking loose struck him. Somehow he got up, made it to another part of the mine and there, a co-worker found him. He was on his knees, leaning against the side of the mine. He was ... dead.

The strong faith that everything *was* from the love of God enabled his twenty-three year old wife to keep loving. "This is my Jesus Forsaken," she would repeat. "I have to love my Jesus Forsaken."' In fact, her concern went to the others, to her children of course, and to Mary. "We didn't want to tell her at first," Susan said. "She was back in the hospital again and in a lot of pain. I knew that she would want to go to Joe's funeral, but she just couldn't make it. Finally though we had to tell her."

The day after the funeral when Paul had returned from their hometown, Mary got up, dressed, and they went downstairs to the little hospital chapel. There they were married in the Church. It was one of the things Joe had wanted so much. The other was that they meet the Focolare family.

On a cold, windy day a few months later, Susan went with Paul and Mary into town in order to meet with some of her friends of the Focolare. "I remember when they drove up," Nancy recounted. "Mary was so shy that she didn't even ►

look at me. I understood too how absorbed she must be in what she was going through." In fact, they were on their way back to the hospital. Mary had already been sick for four months and every two weeks they would return for treatments. Both she and Paul were unable to accept this new reality of her illness. In fact, Mary couldn't even talk about it.

Since their town was four hours away, the Focolare community opened their homes to the young family: Paul and Mary, two year old Stephanie and the baby, Mark. "In the beginning," Pat explained, "sometimes they would let us know they were back in town, sometimes they didn't. One of those times when we *didn't* know, we got a phone call. It was Mary: 'Could you come visit me?' she asked. 'I haven't seen anybody for a whole week!' After that we would call her and say, 'Mary, we would like to come over. What can we bring?' At first she wouldn't say, but little by little, she would tell us, 'Oh, could you bring maybe some candy ...?'

"I went through my drawers to take out things I'd received from even past Christmases—nightgowns, for example, which I had never used, so that we could bring her something," Pat said.

"If we didn't call her in the morning," Chris explained, "she would tell Susan, 'You know, your friends haven't called yet.' Then she'd smile and say, 'But I know. They're coming.'"

They came to know many people in the community. At first it was hard to talk because we were strangers," Pat remembered. "One evening though was the turning point. It was a night when Mary too was able to stay over at our house. All of us were drawn out of ourselves. We forgot all about 'our' things so that we could be totally present for Mary, Paul and the children. We really wanted to 'make ourselves one' with them. I remember, in fact, a real transformation taking place, also in the children. We became one family, even though we were still just getting to know each other."

"Another time," Chris said, "when Paul stayed the night, we had company over. When he returned from the hospital, our friends were just leaving. 'Well, so you are related to Chris?' one of them asked. With an expression of such confidence and joy, Paul turned around smiling, saying, 'No, we're not related! We're just friends. In fact, we only met a few weeks ago!'"

"We never went with any idea of talking about God," Chris continued. "We just went to love her and you could see that she felt loved, part of a family that she was just getting to know."

For example, when Mary began to lose her hair from a reaction to a new drug, several of the families of the Movement put together money—enough to buy a wig for her. "She was delighted with the idea," Pat said. "We checked around and came back with different samples to see which one she liked best. She couldn't get over that we wanted to double-check the style with her."

"Give the receipt to Paul," she said. "But we told her that it was from 'the Eternal Father.' She was nonplussed. She just didn't know what to do with this love," Pat said.

It was during one of these early visits that Mary opened up and confided a question she had. She didn't understand *how* Susan remained so strong now that Joe had died.

"We told her that this was possible only because of her strong faith in God's love," Chris said. "We knew this for a fact. This was what kept Susan going." Then Mary remembered

The Mariapolis was coming up and Mary wanted to know all about it. "Next year, if God wants me to, I will go too," she promised.

now Joe would repeat, 'But *everything* comes from the love of God.' Silently she began making her own steps to trust in God's plan for her and for her family.

In the spring the community planned a birthday party for her: her twenty-third. "She was asleep when we went in," Chris recounted, "so very, very quietly we put up streamers all over her room. We stuck balloons to the intravenous feeding tube stand, around the pictures, everywhere. We put the cake by her bed. Her eyes grew big when she woke up. She kept saying, 'But you must really be my family if you do all this!'"

A day even came when she was able to leave the hospital for a short time. She looked literally beautiful. Out of the closet came the white hat Susan had bought her for Easter. Paul and she were so happy that they looked like newlyweds.

It was just a brief respite, though, before she had to go back. When her blood count dropped radically, she was readmitted. From then on, from one day to the next, her hair fell out. It marked the beginning of a kind of purgatory for her. Because of infection and reactions to various drugs, her body swelled up. It seemed like a fire spread just below the surface of her skin. She felt like she was on fire. At the height of this torment, when visitors came in, she would struggle to turn to greet them and reassure them that she knew they had come. She would try, even then, to talk. "To see her was to see Jesus Forsaken," Chris recounted. "It made me want to love him for her too."

"It was so difficult during this period that we intensified our effort to keep Jesus' presence in our midst as he had promised, 'Wherever two or more....' Whenever we would go to visit her, in fact, we always made a pact before going in to try to be a presence of God's love for her," Pat said.

As the month progressed, her condition worsened. The community mobilized to provide blood for the many tranfusions she needed. "We drew up a list of those who could go and began checking ahead of time so that she would never be left without a supply of blood," Chris said. "She was so surprised that there were so many ready to give blood, that so many were concerned. She felt loved."

"At this point I felt I could freely say to her, 'But you know, Mary, because of your suffering, many many souls can know God."

"'Do you really think so?' she asked. This idea made her happy and little by little she began to accept and offer up her suffering. In fact, many times the nurses would take one or the other of us aside, convinced that we too were her family, and say, 'These treatments, some of them are hard, but Mary never complains. It is hard to understand, but she doesn't. She is really special.'"

"When she grew a little bit stronger one day, she showed us her album," Chris continued. "We spent a long time looking at pictures of her children and husband. Then she turned and said, 'Okay, now let's see yours!' She got to know all our families."

"I would tease her when she would doze off," Nancy said. "'Guess what, Mary!' I'd say." "'You're falling asleep on me!' And she would answer, 'Guess what! I am!'"

The Mariapolis was coming up and she wanted to know all about it. "Next year, if God wants me to, I will go too, " she promised. She asked all the details and worried about everyone getting there and back safely: "Who is going in what car; when is everybody leaving? Don't you think that's a little early? Where will you stop to rest?"

But suddenly, again, she grew extremely sick. Arrangements were made for her to receive the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. As her ►

physical condition deteriorated, her capacity to love intensified. Finally in these last days, her life consisted solely in enduring pain and loving, until the pain reached a point that she said, "I have suffered so much, that I can't go on anymore." She then asked to see her children once more.

"During one of our last visits," Susan said, "I remember bending down to whisper, 'Mary, you know that Jesus and Mary will be waiting for you. And Joe will be there too. Will you greet them for us?' She answered, 'But of course I will!'and she promised too to pray for all of us whom she was leaving behind. 'Tell everyone,' she said, 'thank you. Tell them that I love them.'"

"All the love she had received was like a sign of God's love for her," Nancy said. "She came to believe in it. On her last day when her agony was at its height, I whispered to her, 'Mary, remember to offer this to Jesus so that others get to know him too.' She whispered back: 'I know. I am. I am.'"

Her last hours were marked by a pronounced peace. By this time she was completely sure of God's love for her, for her husband and children. "She put them in his hands," Susan explained, and her peace seemed to envelop her family as well.

At her funeral, one of her sisters came over to say, "But you know, I feel guilty for crying. Mary was so happy. She *is* so happy." □

1) Refers to Jesus in the moment when, on the cross, he cried out, "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" (Mt. 27:46).

A full day

For the past few weeks I have been trying to live this month's word of life: "You will be my witnesses not only in Jerusalem but throughout Judaea and Samaria, and indeed to the ends of the earth"(Acts 1:8), particularly by loving in those occasions that come unexpectedly in my day. Just when I allow myself to be caught up in the whirlwind of daily activities it seems that God comes in and reminds me of my commitment to live for him.

This morning while going through my morning routine preparing for work I accidently turned my ankle while I had a cotton swab in my ear. My arm was knocked against the wall and the swab was shoved further into my ear. I found myself rushing to the hospital emergency room. This was certainly something I had not foreseen for my day and I began to think of what it meant: missing a day of work, my students would be waiting for me, a report was due.... "Why this?"I thought. All right, I had agreed to accept with joy all of the unplanned happenings that arise in my day, but *this?* "Yes, also this," I heard a voice inside of me urge. A decisive "yes" to this will of God changed my view of this accident into a chance to love.

The hospital waiting room was the perfect place to begin. Putting my own injury into God's hands, I tried to find ways to love each person there: trading jokes with the eight year old who had burned her hand and the eleven year old with the gash on his knee, listening to the elderly woman who seemed to be there just waiting to talk to someone, sympathizing with the overburdened nurse with her many forms to be filled out. All seemed to be placed in front of me to be loved and each time I was given the opportunity to be the "witness." By the time the doctor and ear specialist checked my ear thoroughly I was filled with peace. Even when the doctor scolded me for this foolish accident I could accept his admonishment instead of becoming defensive, my natural tendency.

By the end of my day-long adventure I felt the joy in my soul that comes with loving Jesus Forsaken and being with him all day. As it turned out in the end, the colleague to whom I owed the report was also absent and my students were involved with activities and assemblies for a special school holiday. No matter how much I give to God he gives me a "hundredfold"; I just have to always be that witness.

D.C.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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